

COALITION OF CONNECTICUT SPORTSMEN

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Testimony presented to the ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

IN SUPPORT of H.B. No. 6034 (RAISED) AN ACT AUTHORIZING BOW AND ARROW HUNTING ON CERTAIN PRIVATE PROPERTY ON SUNDAYS.

by Robert T. Crook, Director/Lobbyist

03/20/15

First, we applaud Gov Malloy's support of Sunday Hunting in his public statements during the recent election.

This Sunday Hunting bill will help accomplish DEEP Wildlife Management Objectives, increase hunting participation, and is a revenue raiser.

This bill promotes Bowhunting, Private Land only, Written Permission of the Landowner, Deer only.

Last year Virginia PASSED a similar bill: Private land. ALL Hunting implements. (45 States now have Sunday Hunting).

Indisputable Facts:

1. Deer numbers are increasing, while the numbers of hunters is decreasing.
2. Deer/Car collisions and property damage continue to be high.
3. Hunting is the ONLY proven population management technique available for Deer.
4. DEP Wildlife Management has resulted in population balance on most State lands; overpopulation problems are on privately owned lands. The bill allows bow hunting on only private land by the Landowner or with written permission given to the hunter (landowner rights). The landowner can still refuse hunting on Sunday.
5. **Increases Harvest:** About 50% of Deer were taken by bow/crossbow; "The deer harvest on Saturdays during the firearms season is 76% greater than the average harvest on weekdays." (DEP, Dep. Comm. Leff, 2006). The Saturday data applies equally to bowhunting. **Inclement weather on Saturdays, significantly reduces take and management.**
6. **SAFETY:** A century+ of bowhunting record keeping demonstrates NO instance of injury/death of non-hunting participants! Nationally, CT has one of the best safety records. The hunting accidents/incidents are a few persons falling out of tree stands.
7. The bill separates hunters and other recreationalists on private land with Blue Trails, although there have been **NO** instances of accidents/incidents on the other six days. Public lands (State Forests/Parks) are not included.
8. **Sunday Bowhunting is a Revenue Raiser** by allowing those persons who work 6 days per week to participate. For those who work Monday through Friday, a Sunday hunting ban cuts their available hunting time in half. Those working 6 days/week drop out. The most common reason that hunters stop hunting is lack of hunting opportunity which is largely decided by two factors: accessible land and available time. We expect significant license increases.

10. Promoting non-resident involvement: Few hunters will take extended hunting trips to a state that won't let them to hunt on a non-work day. Out-of-state hunters pay higher license fees benefitting DEEP and spend more money than in-state hunters on gas, food, lodging and other incidentals that go along with a week-end hunt. Currently there are 1400 non-resident bowhunting licensees with revenue of \$187,500. A 2014 Act established licenses for Guides and Sunday Bowhunting clearly benefits these small business activities. We expect significant non-resident license increases.

11. Recruiting new hunters. Due to youngster social or athletic obligations on Saturday and the myriad of activities that compete for their attention of young people today, a Sunday hunting restriction means many of them never take up the activity. Sunday hunting allows parents time to hunt with their son/daughter. A 2014 Act reduced 16-18 yr/old fees by half to generate hunting recruitment. Allowing Sunday Bowhunting increases the recruitment probability.

11. Eliminates the last remaining CT Blue Law. In original colony states, so-called Blue Laws restricted many activities on Sunday. The current ban on Sunday hunting is the last holdout of CT blue laws, and hunters are questioning why they are being treated differently from their fellow citizens in 45 other States and why the State accepts significant revenue loss to the DEEP Bureau of Natural Resources which has historically been underfunded..

For too long the Sunday Hunting prohibition has been an impediment to DEP wildlife management. This bill will allow DEP wildlife experts to set seasons/take to improve Deer management. We'd ask you to refuse to maintain the status quo which ignores obvious ecological problems (Forestry regeneration, non-game species declines), public safety (Deer/Car Collisions), and property damage problems.

We urge you to Support Sunday Bowhunting and act to promote this effort as essential to wildlife management and the public interest of the state.